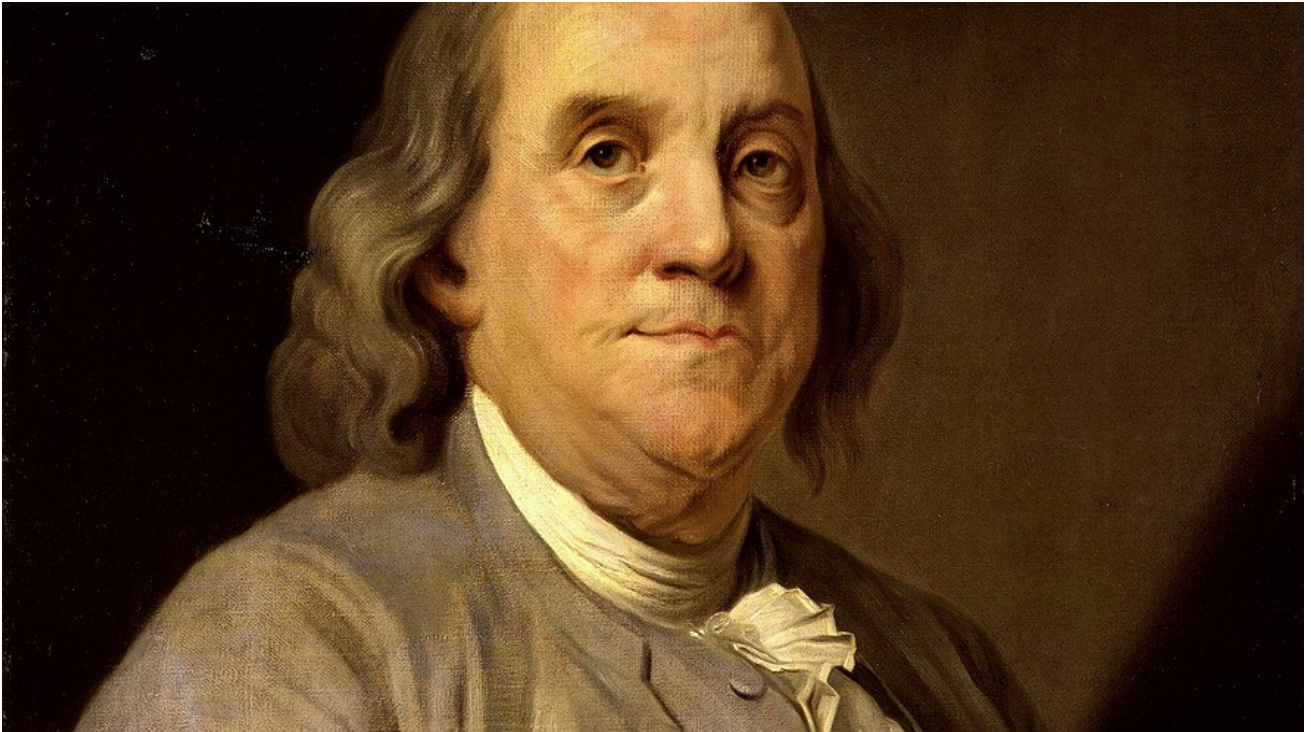


# Inventors and Scientists: Ben Franklin

By Biography.com Editors and A+E Networks, adapted by Newsela staff on 08.16.16

Word Count **466**



A portrait of Benjamin Franklin by Joseph Siffred Duplessis, circa 1785. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

**Synopsis:** Benjamin Franklin was born in Boston in 1706. He helped write the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. He had an important role in ending the Revolutionary War. He studied electricity, math and mapmaking. He was well known for his wit and wisdom.

## Early Life

Benjamin Franklin was born in Boston on January 17, 1706. His father was a soap and candle maker. Franklin was his 15th child and youngest son.

Franklin learned to read at an early age. He stopped going to school when he was 10 years old. He had to work in his father's shop instead. His father let him work at his brother's print shop as well.

Franklin's brother mistreated him. Still, Franklin learned a lot about publishing. He ran away from Boston in 1723. He settled in Philadelphia.

Franklin left for London in 1724. There, he enjoyed seeing plays, talking to people, and reading.

Franklin returned to Philadelphia in 1726. Eventually he opened his own print shop in Philadelphia. He also helped set up the first successful library in America.

## **Witty Inventor**

Franklin became more well known in the 1730s. He published a popular book called "Poor Richard's Almanack." It included weather reports, poetry, and witty lines. One famous line went, "Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise."

Franklin became interested in electricity around the 1740s. He conducted a famous experiment in 1752. He flew a kite with a key attached to it in a lightning storm to show that lightning was electricity.

Franklin invented many things. He developed glasses called bifocals that could be used for both seeing far away and reading. He also invented the first rocking chair and American penny.

## **Pennsylvania Government**

Franklin was very involved in the Pennsylvania government. He thought people in the colonies should band together against England. At first, many people did not think that was a good idea.

In 1757 Franklin sailed to London. He lived there for 20 years. Franklin returned to North America in 1775 to help the American Revolution.

In 1776, Franklin was one of five men to write the Declaration of Independence. This said that people in the colonies did not want to be ruled by England anymore.

## **Dedicated To The End**

Franklin lived in France for almost 10 years. He returned to the United States in 1785. He helped write the U.S. Constitution at age 81.

Benjamin Franklin died on April 17, 1790, in Philadelphia. He was 84 years old. He donated money to schools and museums in Boston and Philadelphia.

Benjamin Franklin never finished school, but he did a wide range of things. He had a strong sense of right and wrong and was dedicated to his country. That is why he is often called the "First American."

## Quiz

- 1 Read the section "Witty Inventor."  
Which paragraph BEST shows why Benjamin Franklin's inventions are important today?
- 2 Which selection from "Dedicated To The End" BEST explains why Ben Franklin is an American hero?
  - (A) Franklin lived in France for almost 10 years. He returned to the United States in 1785.
  - (B) He donated money to schools and museums in Boston and Philadelphia.
  - (C) Benjamin Franklin never finished school, but he did a wide range of things.
  - (D) He had a strong sense of right and wrong and was dedicated to his country.
- 3 What is the main idea of the section "Pennsylvania Government"?
  - (A) Benjamin Franklin lived in London for 20 years.
  - (B) Benjamin Franklin helped to write the Declaration of Independence.
  - (C) Benjamin Franklin was active in the government and helped start the United States.
  - (D) Benjamin Franklin spent lots of time working in the Philadelphia government.
- 4 Which sentence states a main idea of the article?
  - (A) Benjamin Franklin was a successful man who worked very hard for the United States.
  - (B) Benjamin Franklin did a lot of work with electricity and invented the lightning rod.
  - (C) Benjamin Franklin owned a newspaper and wrote a very popular book.
  - (D) Benjamin Franklin invented the American penny, the rocking chair and bifocal glasses.

## Answer Key

- 1 Read the section "Witty Inventor."

Which paragraph BEST shows why Benjamin Franklin's inventions are important today?

**Paragraph 8:**

**Franklin invented many things. He developed glasses called bifocals that could be used for both seeing far away and reading. He also invented the first rocking chair and American penny.**

- 2 Which selection from "Dedicated To The End" BEST explains why Ben Franklin is an American hero?

- (A) Franklin lived in France for almost 10 years. He returned to the United States in 1785.
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- (A) Benjamin Franklin lived in London for 20 years.
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- 4 Which sentence states a main idea of the article?

- (A) Benjamin Franklin was a successful man who worked very hard for the United States.**
- (B) Benjamin Franklin did a lot of work with electricity and invented the lightning rod.
- (C) Benjamin Franklin owned a newspaper and wrote a very popular book.
- (D) Benjamin Franklin invented the American penny, the rocking chair and bifocal glasses.